The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

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THREE-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNERS *MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY* PERFORM AT CMA

" … a living history book of gospel quartet singing …
the *Mighty Clouds of Joy* are still fresh, alive and timeless."
— *Billboard*

CLEVELAND — The near-sellout VIVA! Performing Arts Festival continues with the all-male gospel group *Mighty Clouds of Joy* on Friday, Feb. 25, 2000. During their 40-year musical career, the *Clouds* have pioneered the evolution of modern gospel music, performing with such mainstream stars as Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Paul Simon, James Brown, and the Rolling Stones. Only a limited number of tickets remain at $27. Advance purchase is strongly recommended by calling **1-888-CMA-0033** or online at **www.clemusart.com**. The concert will take place at 7:30 p.m. in Gartner Auditorium.

The first gospel group to perform on "Soul Train," the *Mighty Clouds of Joy* have long been trendsetters. Their mid-70's disco hit "Mighty High" expanded their audience beyond church walls, earning them pop-chart status and popularity in dance clubs nationwide. Other television appearances have included "Prime Time Country," "The Johnny Cash Show," "Merv Griffin Show," "Lou Rawls Parade of Stars," the "Arsenio Hall Show," and specials on CBS and PBS. Three of their 35 recordings have won Grammy Awards. In 1996, the *Clouds* lead singer, original member Joe Ligon, was inducted into the American Gospel Hall of Fame.

Among the first quartets to incorporate movement and choreography into their act, their matching, brightly color-coordinated outfits earned them the nickname "The Temptations of Gospel." Along with this new level of energy and visual artistry onstage, they also spearheaded the addition of bass, drums, and keyboards to the traditional quartet accompaniment of solo electric guitar. Their "funkified" style of gospel has developed into a standard element of the genre.

Says Ligon, "We see ourselves as singers who minister to the people and encourage them that the Lord is real and there for us, and that commitment has only grown stronger over the years. People today seem hungry for much more than entertainment. With all the terrible

things happening in the world right now, their souls are looking for nourishment … for something to believe in. That spark that only the Holy Spirit can give you is still burning strong in us. If we ever lost that, we might as well pack it in and go home."

In addition to Ligon, current members of the *Mighty Clouds of Joy* are Richard Wallace (another original member of the group), Michael McCowin, Wilbert Williams, Johnny Valentine, and Ron Staples.

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VIVA! SERIES PROGRAMMING UPDATE

Performance Added

Due to popular demand, the VIVA! Performing Arts Festival has added a second performance by *Noché Flamenca* on Thursday, Mar. 9, at 7:30 p.m. The Friday, Mar. 10 show has been sold out for weeks. Tickets for the newly added Thursday performance are $28 and $24.

Cancelled Show Replaced

A limited number of tickets are also available at $25 for Cape Verdéan songstress Fantcha and her seven-piece ensemble, who will replace the cancelled *Mammas* on Friday, Mar. 24, 2000. Her torch-style songs and dance numbers have earned her performances at such venues as the Hollywood Bowl, Chicago World Music Festival, and Summerstage in New York. *Fantcha: The Romance of Cape Verdéan Music* will take place at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets for all remaining VIVA! performances are available by calling **1-888-CMA-0033** or online at **www.clemusart.com**.

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Promotional support for VIVA! Performing Arts Festival is provided by WCLV 95/5.

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